

Message Text

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42

ACTION EA-09

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R 110350Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3326

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, MY

SUBJECT: POLITICAL NOTES

1. SUMMARY. THIS MESSAGE TRANSMITS POLITICAL NOTES ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS: (A) DEATH OF MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO ATHI NAHAPPAN; (B) NATIONAL FRONT/CANDIDATE WINS MAY 8 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTION; (C) UMNO YOUTH AND UMNO DEVELOPMENTS; (D) BOMB BLASTS IN SABAH; (E) MINISTER VISITS PRC AND NORTH KOREA; (F) POLICE SALARIES RAISED; AND UNG) DAP MP MAY JOIN MCA. END SUMMARY.

2. DEATH OF MINISTER WITHOUT/PORTFOLIO DATUK ATHI NAHAPPAN, ONE OF THREE MINISTERS WITHOUT PORTFOLIO ATTACHED TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT, DIED MAY 9 AFTER BEING STRICKEN BY WHAT DOCTORS TERMINED "A MASSIVE HEART ATTACK." NAHAPPAN, 51, WAS DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE MALAYSIAN INDIAN CONGRESS (MIC) AND A MEMBER OF THE DEWAN NEGARA (SENATE). A LAWYER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HE ALSO HAD A BACKGROUND IN JOURNALISM. PRIOR TO APPOINT-

MENT AS A CABINET MINISTER ON MARCH 5 HE HAD SERVED AS DEPUTY MINISTER OF LAW. (COMMENT: NAHAPPAN'S DEATH LEAVES MIC PRESIDENT TAN SRI V. MANICKAVASAGAM AS THE ONLY ETHNIC INDIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN THE GOM AT THE MINISTER OR DEPUTY MINISTER LEVEL. THE MIC ALSO HAS ONE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, S. SUBRAMANIAM, ATTACHED TO THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND MANPOWER.)

3. NATIONAL FRONT CANDIDATE WINS BY-ELECTION. IN VOTING MAY 8 FOR KEMAMAN (TRENGGANU) NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT VACATED BY DEATH OF DEPUTY INFORMATION MINISTER DATUK WAN KADIR ISMAIL MARCH 14, NATIONAL FRONT CANDIDATE HAJI ABDUL MANAN OSMAN (UMNO) DEFEATED PARTAI SOCIALIS RAKYAT MALAYSIA (PSRM) CANDIDATE KASSIM AHMAD, 11,204 TO 7,286. OSMAN, 41, IS AN ATTORNEY AND FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE TRENGGANU STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (SEDC). KASSIM AHMAD, 44, IS A FORMER UNIVERSITY LECTURER AND PRESIDENT OF THE MINISCULE LEFT WING MALAY PARTY--THE MALAYSIAN PEOPLE'S SOCIALIST PARTY. (COMMENT: THE PSRM, WHICH HAS BEEN SEEKING TO EXPLOIT GRIEVANCES OF UNDERPRIVILEGED RURAL MALAYS DID SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN EXPECTED, NARROWING THE ELCTORAL GAP FROM FIGURE OF 7,000 FROM THE 1974 ELECTIONS TO ABOUT 4,000, DESPITE ACTIVE CAMPAIGNING BY SUCH UMNO LUMINARIES AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MAHATHIR.)

4. UMNO YOUTH AND UMNO DEVELOPMENTS. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, FIVE NAMES SO FAR HAVE BEEN PLACED IN NOMINATION FOR POST OF UMNO YOUTH PRESIDENT FOR 1976-78 TERM VACATED BY EXPULSION OF FORMER UMNO YOUTH PRESIDENT DATUK HARUN IDRIS FROM UMNO IN LATE MARCH. NOMINEES ARE: (A) DATUK MUSA HITAM (MINISTER OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FORMER DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF UMNO YOUTH); (B) DATUK MOHAMED RAHMAT (DEPUTY MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, WHO AS DEPUTY PRESIDENT CURRENTLY IS SERVING AS "ACTING" PRESIDENT); (C) DATUK HAMZAH BIN ABU SAMAH (MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND BROTHER-IN-LAW OF LATE PM RAZAK); (D) HAJI SUHAIMI (MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR SUBANG, SELANGOR, A NEPHEW AND RIGHTHAND MAN OF DATUK HARUN); A
(E) DATUK SYED NAHAR SHAHABUDDIN
(MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FROM KEDAH AND CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAVINGS BANK). THREE NOMINEES FOR DEPUTY UMNO YOUTH PRESIDENCY ARE: (A) DATUK MOHAMED RAHMAT; (B) HAJI SUHAIMI AND (C) ENCIK MOKHTAR HASIM (DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE). ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD AT ANNUAL UMNO/YOUTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY JULY 2, IMMEDIATELY BEFORE ANNUAL UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETS JULY 3 AND 4. (COMMENT: HAJI SUHAIMI AND DATUK SYED NAHAR ARE IDENTIFIED WITH PRO-HARUN FACTION IN UMNO; THE OTHERS HAVE EITHER BEEN NEUTRAL OR SIDED WITH PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN

ONN IN THE BITTER HARUN CONTROVERSY. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED
IN UMNO CIRCLES THAT MUSA HITAM MUST SEEK EITHER THE
ELECTED UMNO VICE PRESIDENCY AT STAKE IN THE UMNO GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OR CONTEST THE UMNO YOUTH POSITION
(WHICH CARRIES WITH IT AN AUTOMATIC VICE PRESIDENCY) IN
ORDER NOT TO LOSE FURTHER GROUND TO TENGKU TAN SRI RAZALEIGH
HAMZAH, WITH WHOM HE IS VIEWED AS A NATURAL CONTENDER FOR
THE PREMIERSHIP AT SOME FUTURE DATE (RAZALEIGH WAS ELECTED
TO ONE OF THE PRESTIGIOUS UMNO VICE PRESIDENTIAL POSTS AT
THE 1975 UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY). UMNO ACTIVISTS TELL US
HOWEVER THAT MUSA MAY CHOOSE TO CONTEST THE ELCTED VICE
PRESIDENCY THAT CAME VACANT WITH MAHATHIR'S BECOMING ACTING
DEPUTY UMNO PRESIDENT, BECAUSE THIS WOULD BE BETTER FROM THE
"SUCCESSION" POINT OF VIEW AND LESS LIKELY TO ESTRANGE HIM
FROM PARTY LEADERSHIP, IN CONTRAST WITH UMNO YOUTH JOB WHICH
IDENTIFIES OCCUPANT WITH MORE EXTREME "YOUTH" POSITIONS ON
ISSUE.)

5. BOMB BLASTS IN SABAH. POLICE REPORTEDLY HAVE ARRESTED 32
PERSONS IN CONNECTION WITH SO FAR UNEXPLAINED SPATE OF HOME-
MADE BOMB EXPLOSIONS IN KOTA KINABALU AND COASTAL TOWNS OF
SANDAKAN AND KUDAT IN SABAH NIGHT OF MAY 8. TWO PERSONS WERE
KILLED AND TWO OTHERS INJURED IN BLASTS. BOTH CHIEF MINISTER
TUN HAJI MOHAMED FUAD (BERJAYA) AND FORMER CHIEF MINISTER
TUN MUSTAPHA (USNO) DECRID BOMBINGS. (COMMENT: IT IS UNCLEAR
WHETHER BOMBINGS HANDIWORK OF CRIMINAL ELEMENTS OR POLITICALLY
MOTIVATED ALTHOUGH ONE RUMOR HAS IT THAT CULPRITS WERE
PHILIPPINE MUSLIM REFUGEE ELEMENTS DISGRUNTLED OVER DEFEAT
LAST MONTH OF THEIR PATRON, TUN MUSTAPHA.)

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R 110350Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3327

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6. MALAYSIAN MINISTER VISITS PEKING AND PYONGYANG.
HOUSING AND VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT MINISTER MICHAEL CHEN
VISITED THE PRC AND NORTH KOREA FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS IN
LATE APRIL AT THE INVITATIONS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES'
SPORTS MINISTRIES. HE ATTENDED THE ASIAN TABLE
TENNIS UNION CONGRESS IN PYONGYANG IN HIS CAPACITY AS VICE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNION. MALAYSIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF CHEN'S
TRIP WAS VERY LIMITED, EVEN IN THE CHINESE PAPERS, AND WAS
CONFINED TO INTERVIEWS WITH CHEN AFTER HIS RETURN. THE
ONLY SUBJECTS CHEN DISCUSSED WITH REPORTERS WERE THE POSSI-
BILITY OF SEEKING NORTH KOREAN ADVICE ON MALAYSIAN HOUSING
PROBLEMS. STOCK STATEMENTS ON ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN BOTH
COUNTRIES AND A RECITATION OF HIS BRIEFING BY CHINESE LEADERS
ON THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST TENG HSIAO-PING. (COMMENT: THE LOW-
KEY COVERAGE SEEMS TO BE A GOM ATTEMPT TO CONVEY THE
IMPRESSION THAT EXCHANGES WITH THE PRC AND NORTH KOREA HAVE
BECOME ROUTINE MATTERS. HOWEVER, THE SPARSE COVERAGE IN THE
CHINESE PRESS, IN CONTRAST WITH THE FULL ATTENTION NORMALLY
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GIVEN ANY MALAYSIA-PRC EVENT, REVEALED A CONSPICUOUS
GOVERNMENT EDITORIAL HAND.)

7. POLICE SALARIES RAISED AS COUNTER-TERRORIST MEASURE.
PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN MAY 8 ANNOUNCED THAT ALL
POLICEMAN UP THROUGH RANK OF CHIEF INSPECTOR (APPROXIMATELY
EQUIVALENT TO U.S. POLICE SERGEANT) WOULD RECEIVE SUBSTANTIAL
PAY RAISES RETROACTIVE TO JAN 1, 1976. UNDER OLD SCALE,
LOWEST RANK (CONSTABLE) RECEIVED MALAYSIAN DOLLARS
140-270 PER MONTH; CHIEF INSPECTOR RECEIVED MALAYSIAN
DOLLARS 840-1,120. UNDER NEW SCALE, CONSTABLE WILL
RECEIVE MALAYSIAN DOLLARS 205-520 AND CHIEF INSPECTOR
WILL RECEIVE MALAYSIAN DOLLARS 1,255-1,630. PM HUSSEIN
ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT PENSIONS AND ALLOWANCES WOULD BE PAID
TO DEPENDENTS OF POLICEMEN WHO DIED IN COURSE OF DUTY AND
THAT ARMED FORCES ENLISTED AND WARRANT OFFICE PERSONNEL
WOULD RECEIVE TEMPORARY ALLOWANCES, RETROACTIVE TO JAN 1,
UNTIL A NEW SALARY SCHEME COULD BE IMPLEMENTED FOR THEM.
PM SAID THAT PAY RAISES WERE NECESSARY "BECAUSE OF THE

POLICEMEN'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN MAINTAINING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE NATION, AND FIGHTING OFF ANY ATTACK BY ELEMENTS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. ...THE GOVERNMENT AIMS TO MAKE THE POLICE AN EFFICIENT, HONEST, DEDICATED AND SINCERE FORCE SO THAT THEY CAN LOOK AFTER THE SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY." (COMMENT: PAY RAISES FOR SECURITY FORCE PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION FOR SOME TIME AND ARE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN GOM'S PLANS TO RECRUIT AN ADDITIONAL 55,000 POLICEMEN TO BOLSTER SECURITY EFFORT.)

8. OPPOSITION TO DWINDLE FURTHER? THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN RECEIVING PERSISTENT REPORTS IN RECENT WEEKS FROM BOTH NATIONAL FRONT (NF) AND OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (DAP) POLITICIANS THAT DAP MP FOR KUALA LUMPUR LEE LAM THYE IS ABOUT TO DEFECT TO THE LEADING CHINESE PARTY IN THE NF, THE MALAYSIAN CHINESE ASSOCIATION (MCA). IN LINE WITH THESE RUMORS, LEE HAS BEEN ASSOCIATING PUBLICLY FOR THE PAST MONTH OR SO WITH VARIOUS NF POLITICIANS AND HAS POSED FOR PRESS PICTURES WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS THREE TIMES IN THE LAST WEEK. (COMMENT: LEE'S LOSS TO THE DAP WOULD BE PARTICULARLY BITTER SINCE, NOW THAT THE SARAWAK NATIONAL ACTION PARTY HAS APPLIED TO JOIN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NF, THE TOTAL PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION WOULD BE REDUCED TO NINE MEMBERS -- EIGHT OF THEM DAP. LEE IS A DYNAMIC AND ARTICULATE YOUNG POLITICIAN WITH A GOOD PUBLIC IMAGE.) UNDERHILL

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